DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 145 343 CG 011 890

AUTHOR Finn, Peter; Lawson, Jane

TITLE Alcohol: Pleasures and Problems.
INSTITUTION Abt Associates, Inc. Cambridge, Mass.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (DHEW/PHS), Rockville, Md.; Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Div. of Educational Technology.
PUB DATE [75]
NOTE 25p.; For related documents see CG 011 888, CG 011 889, CG 011 892

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Alcohol Education; *Decision Making; *Drinking; Drug Education; Elementary Secondary Education; Guides; *Health Education; Recreational Activities; Socially Deviant Behavior; *Youth

ABSTRACT

This student booklet is to be used in conjunction with the Teacher Manual and films of the DIAL A-L-C-O-H-O-L series. It presents facts and illustrations on the use of alcohol, and is intended to aid young people in deciding whether or not to drink. This booklet is divided into the following parts: (1) Introduction; (2) The Enjoyment of Drinking; (3) Alcohol's Effects on the Mind and Body; (4) Drinking and Driving; (5) Problem Drinking and Alcoholism; and (6) Glossary. (Author/JLL)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ALCOHOL: PLEASURES AND PROBLEMS

ED145343

CG 011890

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ALCOHOL

All of the following pamphlets and books are good reading. You may be able to find them in a library or bookstore or send away for them to the publishers.

1. WHAT IS ALCOHOL? AND WHY DO PEOPLE DRINK? by Gail G. Milgram. 1975. 25 pages. Presents reasons why it is important to learn about alcohol, describes what alcohol is, why people drink it, and what its effects are. Several diagrams and photographs. $ .75 from Publications Division, Center of Alcohol Studies, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903.

2. THINKING ABOUT DRINKING. 1968. 31 pages. Gives information on how many teenagers drink, why they drink, and how much they drink. Also tells about alcohol's effects. $.35 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402. Stock Number 1724-0187. Free from many local alcoholism agencies.

3. PEOPLE DO DRINK AND DRIVE by Jerome W. Witherill. 1972. 25 pages. Presents facts and problem situations involving drinking and driving. $1.20 from the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

4. ALCOHOLISM by Alvin and Virginia Silverstein. 1975. 127 pages. Despite its title, presents a great deal of interesting information about alcohol's effects, teenage drinking, alcohol in history, and how alcoholic beverages are made. $2.25 from local bookstores or J.B. Lippincott Company, 521 5th Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

5. ALCOHOL: DRINK OR DRUG? by Margaret O. Hyde. 1974. 150 pages. Focuses primarily on problem drinking and alcoholism, but has good descriptions of how wine, beer, whiskey and other alcoholic beverages are produced, as well as accounts of drinking throughout the ages. $4.72 from McGraw-Hill Book Company, Box 402, Hightstown, New Jersey 08920.

6. THE DRINKING QUESTION: HONEST ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS TEENAGERS ASK ABOUT DRINKING. 1975. 26 pages. Straightforward introduction to alcohol and drinking issues. $ .55 from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Stock Number 017-024-00473-1.

If you or a friend needs help with an alcohol problem, call up your State Division of Alcoholism or your State Department of Mental Health. You can also write to the following organizations for information and help:

- The National Council on Alcoholism (NCA)
  733 Third Avenue
  New York, New York 10017
  (Consult telephone book for local chapter)

- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) World Services, Inc.
  Post Office Box 459
  Grand Central Station
  New York, New York 10017
  (Consult telephone book for local groups.)

- The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol Information (NCALI)
  Box 2345
  Rockville, Maryland 20852

- National Congress of Parents and Teachers
  Alcohol Education Project
  700 North Rush Street
  Chicago, Illinois 60611

ALCOHOL: PLEASURES AND PROBLEMS

by
Peter Finn
Jane Lawson

Graphics by
Linda W. Clement

Developed by
Abt Associates Inc.
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

for
U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Office of Education
Division of Educational Technology
and
The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION 2
II. THE ENJOYMENT OF DRINKING 2
III. ALCOHOL'S EFFECTS ON THE MIND AND BODY 6
IV. DRINKING AND DRIVING 11
V. PROBLEM DRINKING AND ALCOHOLISM 14
VI. GLOSSARY 20

I. INTRODUCTION

Many teenagers and adults drink alcohol. Many do not. Whether you choose to drink is up to you. In fact, you'll *frequently* have to decide whether to drink and how much to drink. Even if you decide never to drink, you'll be making such decisions as whether to attend a party where alcohol is served and whether to offer alcohol to your guests.

To help you make these choices, this booklet tells you that:

- Most teenagers and adults like to drink because they feel alcohol helps them to enjoy themselves, relax, and share good times.

- Many Americans (about one-quarter) choose not to drink because they just aren't interested in alcohol, because drinking doesn't help them to feel good, or because drinking is against their religion.
- Alcohol affects different people differently, and even the same people differently at different times.
- There is no clear-cut evidence that moderate drinking has any lasting harmful effects on the body or mind.
- There is strong evidence that excessive drinking has permanent harmful effects on the body.
- Having more than one or two drinks shortly before driving a car seriously increases the risk of getting into a traffic accident.
- A significant number of teenagers and several million adults drink too much and have a variety of problems as a result.

There are many things this booklet does not tell you. It won't tell you whether or not you should drink or how much to drink. It won't make any decisions for you at all. That's because when it comes to drinking, *the decisions are always yours.*

If you would like more information about alcohol, you can read some of the pamphlets and books listed on the inside front cover. You can also write, telephone, or visit one of the agencies which are also listed.

II. THE ENJOYMENT OF DRINKING

"Care for a drink?"

"Why don't you stop by our house for a nightcap?"

"How about a beer after work?"

"Cocktails before dinner, sir?"

"Would you care for some wine with your meal?"

These are all standard questions which are very much a part of life in America and which tell us a great deal about drinking in our country. We are a nation of alcohol drinkers. Three out of four American adults drink at least a few times a year; many drink several times a week.

Strangely enough, however, many drinkers have to *learn* to like the taste of alcoholic beverages. Most people when they swallow their first sip wonder what everybody who drinks sees in a glass of beer or a shot of hard liquor. Almost everyone finds their first few beers taste awful. Hardly anyone drinks a shot of whiskey for the first time without gagging. Wine seems to be the only major alcoholic beverage which is often enjoyed the first time it is tried.

Many drinkers continue to delight in the taste of wine. For some families, wine with their meal is a habit, like eating bread or dessert. Just as they enjoy the taste of their steak, rice or pie, so they like the flavor of their wine.

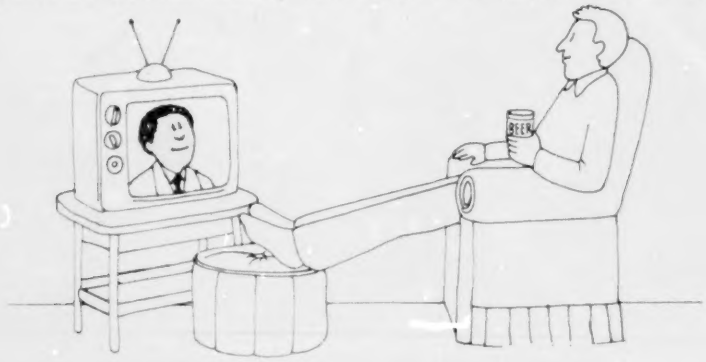
Once they get used to the taste of beer, countless drinkers also enjoy what to them is the unique ability of a cold beer to quench a strong thirst on a hot day.

However, most drinkers never really drink because they like the taste of alcohol. After all, a Bloody Mary can be enjoyed as well without the vodka in it – as a matter of fact, some people drink Bloody Mary mix all by itself. And it's no accident that the most popular hard liquor in America – vodka – has no flavor at all. Even some wines taste good to those who drink them because sugar has been added before they have been bottled.

Most people drink because they like the effects alcohol has on them after they've swallowed it. Alcohol helps most drinkers to do several things:

- relax,
- forget minor worries,
- relate to people better, and
- have more fun.

Amost everyone spends part of many days feeling somewhat worried, angry, sad, or tense. People deal with these unpleasant feelings in many different ways. Most just put up with them and wait until they disappear: the worry passes, the anger subsides, and the sadness goes away. Other people, if they can, talk with friends or family, go to a movie, play sports, or engage in a hobby. Many people, however, want help in forgetting their worries and find alcohol lessens these unpleasant feelings. At the end of a busy day, when many people come home from work or put aside their housekeeping and have no further need to perform at peak efficiency, they find a beer or cocktail helps them to relax or "unwind." Others have a drink with lunch to help take some of the harshness out of the day's work.



Besides helping some people to relax, a drink or two at a party or social gathering helps many people to talk with each other more easily. People who find it a little difficult to strike up a conversation with strangers often find alcohol helps them talk about themselves, listen to others, and make jokes.

Alcohol is also drunk by many people as part of special occasions in order to enliven things or to bring out the special importance of the event. Numerous people drink beer at ball games, champagne at weddings, mulled apple cider at Thanksgiving, and hot buttered rum after skiing.

These people do not drink in order to enjoy themselves — they're *already* having a good time. Rather, they drink to heighten their pleasure and have an even *better* time.

In addition, for many people drinking with friends and family helps them to feel close to each other and *share* their happiness. Part of this sharing relates to doing something together — like offering a champagne toast, filling everyone's wine glass, or treating friends to a beer.

Drinking, in short, gives many people another chance to relate to each other in ways that express and promote friendship. Many a couple has brought more pleasure to an evening of closeness in a quiet restaurant with a bottle of wine. How many friends have met over a beer to talk over "old times," celebrate an athletic victory, or rejoice at the end of a long stint of hard work.

But enjoying alcohol for some people doesn't mean only drinking it. Many people like to cook with various alcoholic beverages. Shrimp boiled in beer, chicken cooked in wine, or cake soaked with rum are considered taste treats by many dinner guests (even though in the cooking the alcohol itself evaporates — only the flavors remain).

Likewise, there are drinkers who take great pride in their talents as home bartenders. Creating their own new drinks, mixing "the best Brandy Alexander in town" and stocking "a really fine bar" can be enjoyable pastimes to them.

Then there are the wine experts. Some people think of the wine connoisseur as a person in a fancy restaurant who spends ten minutes carefully examining a long wine list before ordering a $28 bottle of wine with a strange French name. But many everyday people get to know and enjoy a variety of good wines in restaurants and at home, often sharing these "favorites" with their friends who also like wine.

In short, many Americans find drinking a pleasant activity. Alcohol, put most simply, helps them to feel good.

Many People Do Not Drink

But if most people enjoy drinking, why do 20-30 million Americans choose not to drink?

People who abstain from alcohol do so for a number of reasons. Often, they simply don't need to use alcohol to help them feel good. Usually, they're happy enough the way they are. Or they have other ways to relax or share good times, such as through hobbies, talking, eating, playing sports or cards, bicycling, or watching television.

Many people do not like the idea of using any drug, including alcohol, except for medical purposes. Others don't enjoy the partial loss of control they experience after one or more drinks. While there is no evidence that moderate use of alcohol causes any permanent damage, many people see no point in putting up with even the temporary damage to their stomach, liver and brain which even one drink always causes. Sometimes illnesses, such as diabetes and ulcers, make it dangerous for a person to drink. Many people also believe it is sinful to drink.

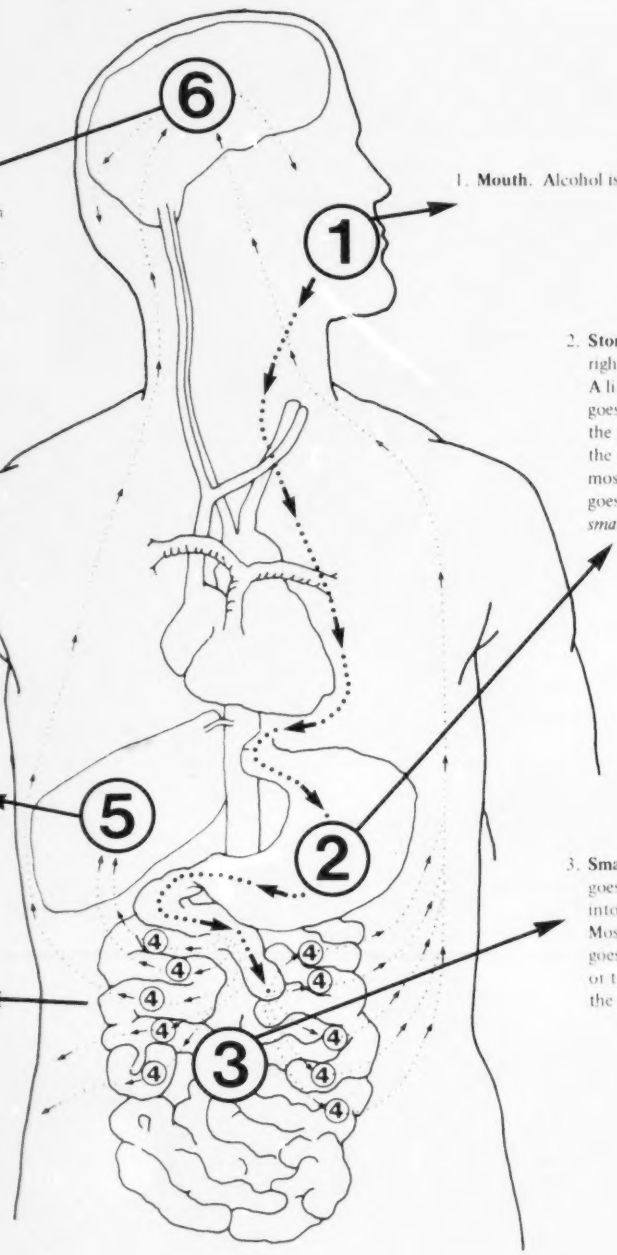
Finally, some people want to drink but won't because they can't stand the taste of alcohol, are concerned about the extra calories it provides, or want to spend their money on what to them are more important things. There are also many alcoholics who have recognized their drinking problem and do not drink because they know what harm drinking causes them.

One of the interesting things about alcohol is that people have so many *different* reasons for drinking it or abstaining from it. It may be helpful to remember these reasons as you make up *your* mind about whether to drink or how much to drink — and as you meet and relate to *other people* whose drinking habits may be similar to or different from yours.

Certainly, for many people one thing to think about in deciding whether to drink or how much to drink is what the effects of alcohol are on the mind and body. The next chapter describes these effects in detail.

III. ALCOHOL'S EFFECTS ON THE MIND AND BODY

Alcohol passes through a person's body the same way every time he or she drinks. The chart on this page illustrates this process. The dotted lines show where alcohol goes. The numbers indicate the order in which alcohol reaches the various parts of the body. Although alcohol reaches the brain last, it gets there within minutes after it has been drunk.



1. **Mouth**. Alcohol is drunk.

2. **Stomach**. Alcohol goes right into the stomach. A little of the alcohol goes through the wall of the stomach and into the bloodstream. But most of the alcohol goes down into the *small intestine*.

3. **Small intestine**. Alcohol goes from the stomach into the small intestine. Most of the alcohol then goes through the walls of the intestine and into the *bloodstream*.

4. **Bloodstream**. The bloodstream then carries the alcohol to *all* parts of the body, such as the brain, heart, and *liver*.

5. **Liver**. As the bloodstream carries the alcohol around the body, it carries it through the liver, too. The liver changes the alcohol to water, carbon dioxide, and energy. This process is called *oxidation*. The liver can oxidize (change into water, carbon dioxide, and energy) only about one-half ounce of alcohol an hour. This means that until the liver has time to oxidize all of the alcohol, the alcohol *keeps on* passing through all parts of the body, including the *brain*.

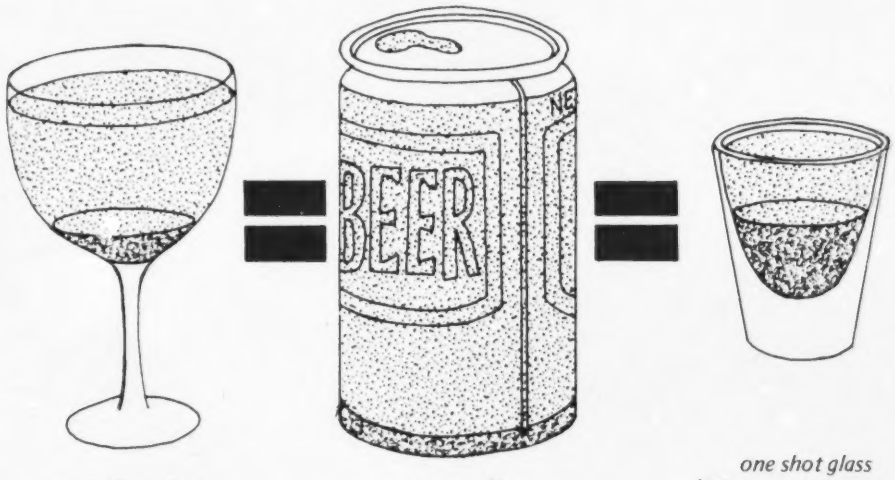
6. **Brain**. Alcohol goes to the brain almost as soon as it is drunk. The bloodstream carries it there. Alcohol keeps passing through the brain until the liver has had time to change (oxidize) all the alcohol into carbon dioxide, water, and energy.

Why Alcohol Has Different Effects

Even though alcohol passes through everyone's body the same way, drinking has very different effects on different people. Even when the same person drinks exactly the same amount of alcohol on two different occasions, it can have very different effects. Four different factors influence how alcohol affects people: how much they drink, how much they weigh, how much they have eaten, and how they think and feel about drinking.

1. *Amount of Alcohol.* Of course, the most important influence on how alcohol affects people is how much alcohol they drink. The more alcohol, the stronger the effects. And the key word here is *alcohol.* A person may be drinking beer, wine, or whiskey but what matters is how much alcohol there is in each of these drinks.

   Most people think that whiskey is "stronger" than beer or wine. However, this isn't necessarily true. As the illustration below indicates, a 5-ounce glass of wine and a 12-ounce can of beer have the same amount of alcohol in them as a 1½-ounce shot glass of hard liquor. The reason *mixed drinks* (alcohol plus soda, orange juice, etc.) are often "stronger" than beer or wine is that the host or drinker has put a lot *more* than one shot of alcohol into the glass – perhaps two or three shots.



one glass of wine (5 ounces) has **½ ounce of actual alcohol**

one can of beer (12 ounces) has **½ ounce of actual alcohol**

one shot glass (1½ ounces of 86 proof hard liquor) has **½ ounce of actual alcohol**

2. *Body Weight.* People who weigh a lot are less affected by the same amount of alcohol than lighter people. That's because heavier people have more blood and water in their bodies so the same amount of alcohol will be diluted and not affect them as much.

3. *Food.* Alcohol "goes to your head" more slowly if you've just eaten or eat while you drink. Food slows down the passage of the alcohol from the stomach to the small intestine. It's from the small intestine, not the stomach, that most of the alcohol gets absorbed into the bloodstream and carried to the brain (look at the body diagram again on the previous page).

All these reasons – amount of alcohol, weight, food – are *physical* reasons why alcohol affects people differently. But, as we noted, the same person may be affected differently when he or she drinks on different occasions *even though the same amount of alcohol has been drunk.* This is because there is a fourth influence which determines how alcohol affects us which has nothing to do with alcohol as such or with our bodies. This fourth influence is how we think and feel about alcohol.

4. *Thoughts and Feelings about Drinking.* First of all, experienced drinkers often develop what is called *psychological tolerance.* On the basis of many drinking experiences, they have learned what alcohol does to them and can *compensate* or make up for its effects. Just as a sailor eventually learns to walk across the deck of a rolling ship, the experienced drinker learns to stand up very slowly or reach for the salt very carefully after three or four drinks on an empty stomach. In fact, drunks sometimes practice walking in a straight line or touching their noses so they can make the police think they are sober if they are arrested. However, just as the experienced sailor does not stop a ship from rolling but learns to make up for the tilting, the experienced drinker cannot prevent alcohol from affecting him; he can only learn to *cope with* the effects of the alcohol.*

Second, alcohol may affect someone differently depending on what a person *expects* to happen after drinking. When drinkers expect to get "high," they are more likely to do so. In fact, in careful studies when experienced college drinkers were given phony alcohol but told it was the real thing, most of them got high! (The same study has been done with marijuana: experienced smokers got high even though they weren't smoking the real thing.)

Third, people's *mood* when they're drinking affects what alcohol does to them. Alcohol may simply make someone who is already feeling unhappy more depressed; or it may enable someone who feels cheerful to become even happier.

Finally, *where* someone drinks, or the *setting*, may affect how someone reacts to alcohol. Someone drinking at a party among close friends is more likely to feel good after drinking then if he or she drinks alone at home.

While drinking has different effects on different people and sometimes on the same person at various times, we do know what some of the major effects are which alcohol will have on *many*, if not most people.

*We often think we can tell when somebody is drunk or "high." But because of psychological tolerance, we may be fooled into thinking a drinker is sober when that may not be the case. It is very difficult to know how badly alcohol has affected a drinker's ability to perform complex tasks, like driving, simply by watching his or her behavior in familiar and routine activities.

Alcohol's Most Common Effects

1. *Pleasure.* For most people, liquor heightens pleasure and enthusiasm. It enables them to let go, to be friendly, to experience feelings more strongly, to relax, and to have a good time. While drinking often heightens pleasant feelings, it also may help people to feel good by making them less aware of unpleasant feelings and events.

2. *Inhibitions.* Alcohol tends to reduce people's inhibitions or shyness and loosen self-control, although they may feel this effect as stimulation. Some of the feelings that may be released include anger, hostility, feelings of inferiority or superiority, overconfidence, love, generosity, tenderness, and jealousy. All of these feelings may result in unusual (for the drinker) behavior, such as crying, fighting, yelling, hugging, laughing, nagging, and taking risks. However, people with no major "hang-ups" may experience no important changes in behavior when they drink

3. *Thinking.* While small amounts of alcohol with food will not normally affect most people's ability to think clearly, increasing amounts tend to make it harder for people to make judgments, concentrate, and understand. In particular, alcohol may prevent inexperienced drinkers from realizing that their ability to think clearly and act normally isn't very good. *They* think they're "sober as a judge." However, experienced and mature drinkers often know very well when they can't think clearly or act sensibly.

4. *Performance.* Generally speaking, the more alcohol a person drinks, the more difficulty he or she will have doing physical tasks. However, moderate amounts of alcohol (one or two drinks) do not seem to hurt many people's ability to act sensibly. For some people and some tasks, small amounts of alcohol may help them to do things better, perhaps because it relaxes them by removing tension or nervousness which sometimes inhibits behavior. For example, a couple of drinks can make sexual activity easier for some people – but larger amounts of alcohol make sex more difficult and often impossible.

5. *Diseases and Bodily Damage.*

   a. *Liver.* Most people who die from cirrhosis (scar tissue replacing liver cells) are heavy drinkers because alcohol directly damages the liver. However, so far there is no evidence that drinking small amounts over a lifetime causes permanent liver damage.

   b. *Brain.* Alcohol seems to permanently destroy brain cells. The question then becomes how many extra brain cells a person has that can take over the work of those cells destroyed by alcohol during a human lifetime.

   c. *Delirium Tremens.* Alcoholics who stop drinking may have the "DTs." They shake, have convulsions, and may see and hear things. This condition occasionally leads to death. The DTs are the body's response to suddenly being without alcohol ("stopping cold turkey") when it has become used to regular, heavy amounts.

   d. *Death.* Very large amounts of alcohol (for example, a quart drunk in 5-30 minutes) may occasionally cause death by anesthetizing (putting to sleep) the brain center which "tells" us to breathe. Three people die every day in the United States from alcohol overdoses. Alcohol, when combined with certain other drugs, particularly barbiturates and heroin, has an even more depressing effect on the brain. The two drugs combined do not simply add their effects. Rather, each

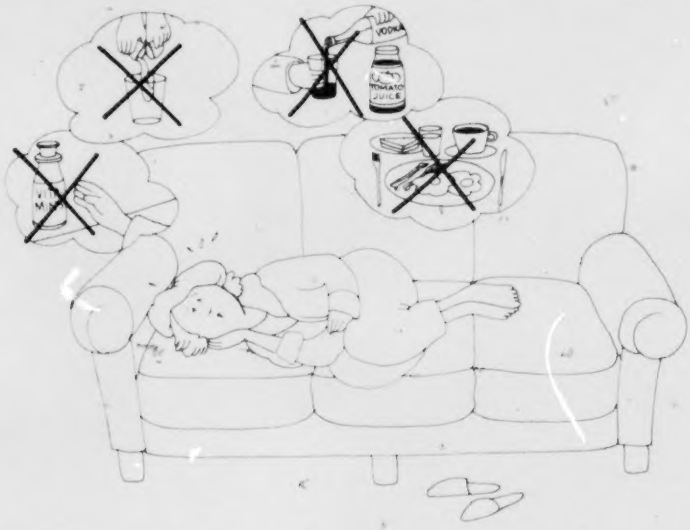
drug makes the other even stronger, so that the effect is like 1 + 1 = 4. For example, many people, like Janis Joplin, Coltrane, and Marilyn Monroe, who supposedly died from overdoses of heroin or barbiturates, had also been drinking heavily at the time. Even one or two average drinks of alcohol, when taken with common medicines, can have very powerful effects. Cold medicines taken before or after a drink can make people very sleepy; aspirin and alcohol combine to eat away the stomach lining; and drinking and taking tranquilizers (drugs taken to calm people down) can cause dizziness and clumsiness.

6. *Physical Tolerance.* Moderate or heavy drinking over a period of several years usually reduces many effects of alcohol on the body, so that more alcohol is required to produce the same effects.

7. *Body Temperature.* People who drink usually feel warmer because alcohol increases the blood supply to the skin. However, although a drinker may feel warmer, body temperature has actually gone down.

8. *Energizer.* While alcohol helps some people sleep, it seems to act as a stimulant for others so that they don't feel as tired. In fact, alcohol is a depressant which makes some people *feel* more energetic by dulling the part of the brain that tells us when we are tired and by helping us to forget our worries.

9. *Hangovers.* A hangover is the awful feeling someone gets from having drunk too much the day before. People may feel nauseous, tired, thirsty or have a terrible headache. Some drinkers never get hangovers, while others get them all the time. A few people get them after only one or two drinks. No one knows for sure, yet, what causes hangovers. All we know is that they happen *after* all the alcohol has left the body and that there are no ways to cure them. Taking vitamins or having a big breakfast won't help. Taking another drink may help – but only for a while. Only time, rest, and perhaps aspirin will make a hangover go away.



Alcohol's Effects on Teenagers

Drinking often has a stronger effect on teenagers than it does on older people. There are three reasons for this.

First, most teenagers weigh less than older people. As we've seen, the less people weigh, the more effect alcohol has on them. (You can experiment with the effects of different body weights using the Blood Alcohol Content Wheel at the end of this booklet.)

Drinking also can have a greater effect on teenagers because they have not yet learned to compensate or make up for what alcohol does to them. It takes years for baseball outfielders to learn how to compensate for the wind when a fly ball is hit their way. Just as outfielders have to tell themselves, "Slow down because the wind is going to hold up the ball," so people who get clumsy after two or three drinks have to learn to say to themselves, "Don't grab for the salt; reach very slowly." This ability to compensate for alcohol's effects, we noted, is called *psychological tolerance.*

Finally, teenagers often have more stresses than older people. The teen years for most people are a difficult time of life. Many new things happen to them which are often both exciting and frightening – for example, independence, a paying job, sex, a car, travel, and so on. When alcohol is added to something which we're not used to and which is also very exciting or somewhat frightening, it can make it harder for us to control how we feel and what we do while drinking.

IV. DRINKING AND DRIVING

The combination of drinking and driving is an extremely serious problem in America. More than 22,500 traffic deaths each year involve a drinking driver, or over sixty deaths *every day*. More people have been killed in alcohol-related traffic accidents in this country than have died in all our foreign wars. Drinking may be the most frequent single cause of automobile accidents.

How Many Drinks Make Driving a Car Dangerous?

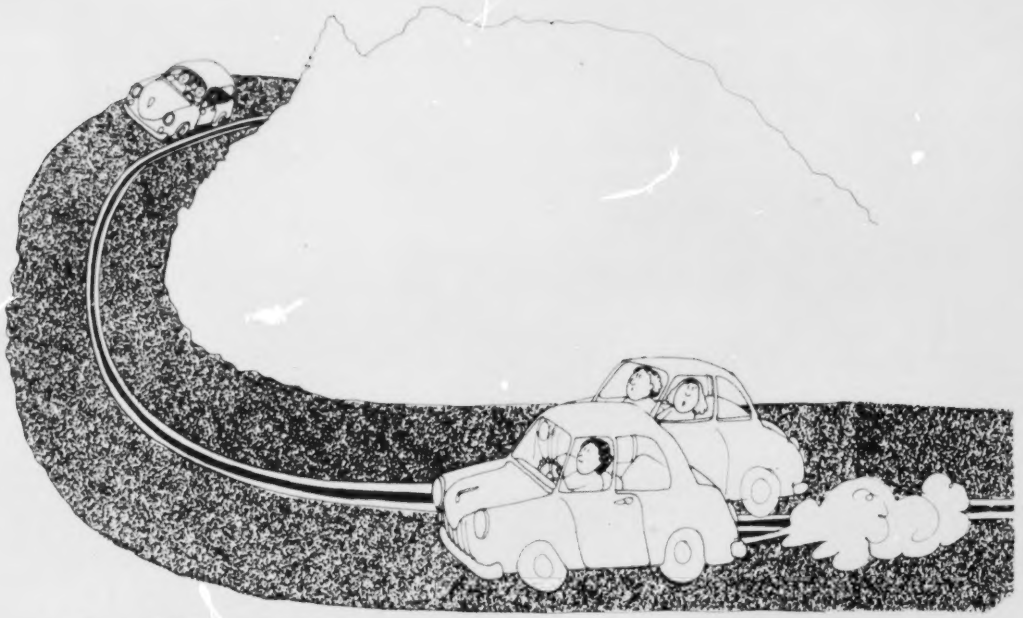
Drinking and driving *can* mix when the drinking is very moderate or when enough time passes between the time people drink and the time they drive. But just how many drinks does it take to make driving a car dangerous?

Automobile driving experts have done enough tests to answer this question. For example, they have scientifically tested the driving ability of skilled racing drivers before and after giving them alcohol. They learned that for someone who weighs 150 pounds, has not eaten before drinking, and drives within an hour after drinking, three or four average drinks (cans of beer, shots of whiskey, glasses of wine) make driving much more dangerous even for very skilled drivers. Four normal drinks (or two or three extra strong drinks) taken an hour before driving make it about six times more likely a person will have an accident than if he or she were sober. For some people driving after drinking only one or two average drinks can be dangerous, too.

What Effects Can Alcohol Have on Driving?

Below is a list of some of the effects drinking *may* produce on drivers after three or four average drinks and *will* produce on drivers after five or more average drinks.

1. *Reduced ability to judge things*, such as distances, speeds, and angles.
2. *Reduced ability to judge one's own abilities* and therefore reduced awareness of one's poor performance: even though the motorist is driving poorly, *he* may not think he is.
3. *Greater tendency to take risks*, such as passing on a curve, because of feeling overconfident.



4. *Forgetfulness,* such as not turning lights on at night, leaving high beams on, and not signalling turns.

5. *Impaired reflexes:* Reduced ability to deal with the unexpected, like skids, blinding by on-coming high beams, sudden appearance of other cars or pedestrians, changing signal lights, road construction, and faulty or wet brakes.

6. *Sleepiness.* Alcohol combined with the natural fatigue of a late evening makes a person even more sleepy and unable to concentrate.

Drinking and Driving Situations

Even though we know that driving after excessive drinking can be very dangerous, many people won't try to persuade a friend not to drive after drinking too much. Or try to talk a friend out of *riding* with a drunk driver. Why is this so difficult for so many people to do?

Imagine yourself at a party where your best friend has had too much to drink to drive safely. Your friend is about to give you a ride home because you don't have a car. What would you do? Maybe you've already been faced with this problem. If so, what *did* you do?

There are lots of reasons why you might feel you didn't want to stop your friend from driving – or even why you were willing to ride along with him or her. Maybe you're afraid your friend would get angry at you or you're too lazy to walk home or take the bus. Perhaps, too, you figure there's really only a small chance you'll get into an accident this time.

However, if you decided to prevent your friend from driving, how could you do it? The possibilities are endless. You could:

- tell him he's a fool, immature, or crazy;
- give her the facts about the dangers;
- tell him he's not a friend any more or won't be invited over any more;
- physically restrain her or take her car keys;
- try to scare him with bloody stories of pain, scars, and injuries;
- persuade her not to drive and to let you drive;
- persuade him to ask someone else to drive;
- persuade her to take a taxi or bus;
- get other people to help you talk to him.

Blood Alcohol Concentration

As we've seen, counting how many drinks people have had isn't a very good way to learn how much alcohol they've drunk. A beer may have 8 to 16 ounces; a mixed drink may have one shot of whiskey or three.

Because of this problem, alcohol specialists and the police use blood or breath tests to learn how much alcohol *is in a person's bloodstream.* This is essential because alcohol affects people only when it enters their bloodstream from the small intestine. This amount of alcohol in the blood is called *blood alcohol content*, or *BAC* for short.

Only four factors affect the amount of alcohol in a person's blood – that is, his BAC:

1. The *amount of alcohol* a person drinks, not the number of drinks.
2. Whether the person has *eaten* before drinking or eats while drinking.
3. How much a person *weighs.*
4. How much *time goes by* after drinking or between drinks.

Nothing else affects a person's BAC. Mixing drinks will not make someone drunker nor will cold showers or drinking hot coffee make someone more sober* because none of these things changes the amount of alcohol in a person's blood – his BAC.

In most states there is a law which says that anyone caught driving who has a BAC of .10% or higher is presumed to be driving while intoxicated (DWI). Four average drinks taken within one hour (or five or six drinks in two hours) would give a person who weighs 150-175 pounds a BAC of .10%. This doesn't mean it's safe to drive with a BAC of under .10%; it just means that *legally* you're not considered to be driving under the influence unless your BAC reaches .10%. We all know that some people drive legally but dangerously at times.

At the end of this booklet is a Blood Alcohol Content Wheel you can cut out and experiment with. You can figure out how many average drinks you would have to take to reach a BAC of .10%. Instructions for putting the BAC Wheel together are provided on the first page of the wheel.

*However, the *time* which passes while taking a shower or drinking coffee (or tea or cocoa) will give the body a chance to get rid of more alcohol from the bloodstream.

V. PROBLEM DRINKING AND ALCOHOLISM

Before reading this chapter, try answering the following questions. You'll find the correct answers on page 19. If you find some of your answers don't agree with ours, the rest of the chapter will explain our answers.

1. An alcoholic is someone who

a. drinks too much once in a while	*True* ☐	*False* ☐
b. can't stop drinking once he or she starts	*True* ☐	*False* ☐
c. has problems **because** *of his or her drinking*	*True* ☐	*False* ☐

2. It's impossible for someone to become an alcoholic by drinking just beer.

True ☐ *False* ☐

3. Most alcoholics have jobs and live with their families.

True ☐ *False* ☐

4. Almost all alcoholics are men; there are very few women alcoholics.

True ☐ *False* ☐

5. Alcoholics are usually people who, if they wanted to, could easily "pull themselves together" and stop drinking without outside help.

True ☐ *False* ☐

6. Most alcoholics are skid row bums.

True ☐ *False* ☐

7. There are many more alcoholics in this country than drug addicts.

True ☐ *False* ☐

8. Once people become alcoholics, it's too late to help them.

True ☐ *False* ☐

Who Are Problem Drinkers and Alcoholics?

What do we really mean when we say somebody drinks *too* much? What's too much? To some people, it's any alcohol at all. To others, it's getting drunk. To some people, drinking two cocktails every evening or during lunch is too much.

Of course, we would all agree that getting drunk every day is too much. We would also agree that someone who doesn't drink *any* alcohol is certainly not drinking too much. But except for obvious examples like these, *you* will have to decide for yourself what is "too much."

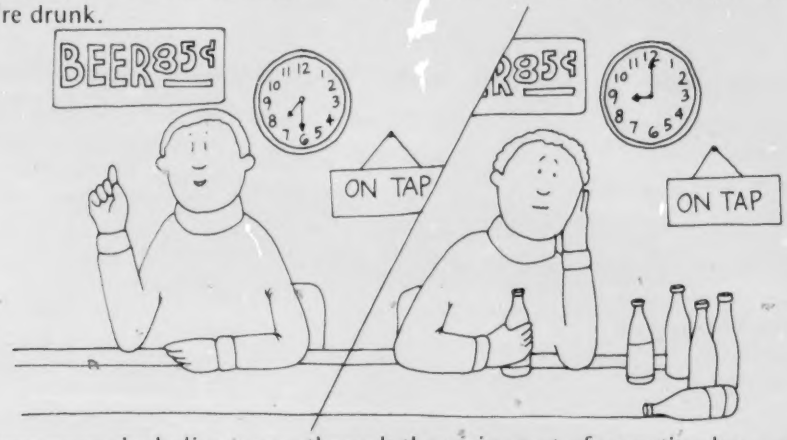
One way to decide is to see whether someone's drinking is causing any problems. If so, that person is drinking too much. The problem may be with friends, at work, in school, at home, or with driving a car. The problem may be obvious, like a drunk driving accident. Or the problem may be hidden, like damage to the liver.

There are two kinds of people who drink too much: *problem drinkers* and *alcoholics*. Both kinds have *problems* because they drink too much. But in other respects they differ.

Problem drinkers. First of all, problem drinkers may not drink very often. For example, the person who gets high while bowling or playing cards only on Friday evenings *and then drives home* has a drinking problem even if she or he doesn't touch alcohol for the rest of the week. Such a person is risking a serious traffic accident 52 times a year. A person with a serious ulcer may set a limit of one martini a day before dinner. However, since alcohol in concentrated doses* irritates the stomach, this person, too, may have a drinking problem.

Most problem drinkers not only drink less often than alcoholics, they can also *control* their drinking if they want to. If ordered by a doctor to stop or reduce their drinking, they probably could do so. Problem drinkers can also drink socially – that is, *not* get high or drunk if they feel the situation calls for staying sober.

Alcoholics. There are, however, people who *cannot control* their drinking at all or only with great difficulty and for short periods of time. Such people are called alcoholics. Usually, alcoholics spend at least part of every day not just drinking, but getting high or drunk. And they can't drink socially: if they take one drink, they keep right on drinking until they're drunk.



However, some alcoholics can go through the major part of an entire day – every day – without drinking.** But as soon as they get off work, or as soon as the weekend arrives, they drink until they get drunk. Unlike the problem drinker, they *must* get drunk those evenings or weekends.

Because some alcoholics *seem* to be able to control their drinking, it is often difficult to tell the difference between problem drinkers and alcoholics. In addition, a problem drinker may simply be an alcoholic in an early stage of his or her disease.

There may be as many as ten million alcoholics in America today and several million more problem drinkers. While we hear a lot about how many teenagers "get into trouble" with "drugs," many more youths have problems with the drug alcohol than with all other drugs combined. In a recent survey of 13,000 junior and senior high school students across the country, nearly one in ten indicated he or she had problems connected with alcohol during the past year.

Some people think that the poor have most of the drinking problems, but, in fact, people from every social class and ethnic group have drinking problems. And while more men have drinking problems than women, there may be as many as two million women alcoholics in America. Women alcoholics tend to hide their drinking more than men because "it doesn't look nice" for women to be seen drunk and because many alcoholic housewives drink only at home.

---

*A martini is made by mixing 2 alcoholic beverages, gin and vermouth – 2 shots of gin plus 1 shot of vermouth – and its alcoholic content is about equal to that of 2½ beers, glasses of wine, or shots of whiskey.

**Some alcoholics can stop drinking for a week or even several months.

What Is It Like to Be an Alcoholic?

At one time, people felt that alcoholics were "sinners" – immoral people who acted against God's will on purpose. Later, alcoholics were treated as criminals and jailed or fined. Today, most health workers consider alcoholism to be an illness – a disease like tuberculosis or diabetes. In this sense, alcoholism is not the drinkers' fault – they're not to blame for drinking so much; it's beyond their control. Alcoholics cannot be blamed for drinking too much any more than tuberculosis victims can be criticized for coughing too much. Alcoholism is also felt to be an illness in the sense that its "cure" lies not in punishment or ignoring the problem, but rather in treatment.

Most people think that the final stage for alcoholics is when they end up on skid row – the part of town where "bums" hang out. However, while some alcoholics do end up on skid row, most of them hold jobs and live with their families. To outsiders, in fact, alcoholics often seem to lead normal lives – partly because their families may try to cover up for them. But those who are close to them usually know better.

One of the toughest problems for alcoholics is that they usually won't admit to themselves or to others that they *have* lost control over their drinking. Alcoholics think to themselves, "If I really wanted to, I could stop drinking." Sometimes they think they can't be alcoholics because they're not on skid row. Or they think of an alcoholic as a weak, disgusting person, and they don't want to put themselves into that category. Some alcoholics who get drunk on beer claim they drink normally because "no one can become an alcoholic just by drinking beer." But the most important reason alcoholics won't admit they have a drinking problem is because that would mean admitting they need to stop drinking. Usually, they can't imagine a life without alcohol, so they can't take that first step of admitting they're drinking too much.

Few people who are not alcoholics themselves really know what it's like to be an alcoholic. If you're interested in seeing what it might be like, there are two things you can do:

1. **Experiment.** *You can conduct a simple experiment. Pick one or two things you do which you would find very difficult – maybe impossible – to stop doing. Then try to stop doing them for a few days or a week. It might be more fun to experiment with a friend, with both of you abstaining from different activities. Depending on your "passions," you could:*

- *use no salt or sugar on your food*
- *give up cigarettes*
- *stop seeing or talking to a close friend*
- *not kiss your girlfriend, boyfriend, husband or wife*
- *not make or answer any telephone calls*
- *get up at 5:00 a.m. every morning, including weekends*
- *stop watching television*
- *give up Coke, coffee, or another favorite beverage*
- *give up your favorite sport or other form of recreation*
- *stop chewing gum*

After you've "abstained" from your favorite activity for a week, you and your friend might think about the following questions.

1. *What did it feel like not to be doing your favorite activity? Did you miss it badly? Did you get angry? miserable? grouchy? bored?*
2. *Did you start doing things that you don't usually do, like avoid people, get into arguments, or spend more time doing something else?*
3. *Did you "cheat" at all? If so, did you try to engage in your "forbidden" activity just a little and find you couldn't resist doing it all the way? If you cheated, did it make you feel guilty?*
4. *Did you spend a lot of time thinking about doing your "forbidden" activity? Did you even dream about it?*
5. *When you finally did go back to it at the end of the experiment, how did it feel? Did you try to "make up for lost time"?*

When you've thought about these questions, you can ask yourself, "How might my actions and feelings be similar to those of an alcoholic who is trying not to drink?"

2. Visit an AA Meeting. *You can also learn more about alcoholism by visiting an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Alcoholics Anonymous, or AA for short, is an organization with thousands of local groups throughout the world whose members get together to stop drinking and stay sober. Many of these meetings are open to the public. Look up Alcoholics Anonymous or AA in your phone book to find out where and when meetings near you take place which you can attend.*

There are also meetings of Alateen groups. Members of Alateen are teenagers whose mothers or fathers are alcoholics. Alateen members meet to talk about the problems they have living with an alcoholic parent. Many of these groups also welcome visitors.

Causes of Problem Drinking and Alcoholism

There are three theories about why people keep on drinking even though alcohol is causing serious problems for them.

Psychological theories hold that something in the personality of problem drinkers and alcoholics – their thoughts and feelings – causes them to drink.

Social theories stress that how people drink results from what's going on in their society or culture. Italians, Jews, and Orientals are thought to develop few drinking problems because their cultures frown on drunkenness and encourage moderate social drinking at an early age.

Some people become problem drinkers because their circle of friends or their culture doesn't stress or admit to the dangers of drinking too much. In France, many people believe that alcohol is good for their health and for this and other reasons end up drinking large amounts day after day.

Biological theories for alcoholism claim that alcoholism may sometimes be inherited or that alcoholics may have (or be missing) some chemical in their bodies which makes alcohol affect them more than other people.

Unfortunately, no one knows for sure why many people, including more and more teenagers, develop drinking problems. Research is still going on. If you're interested in the latest theories, you can write to one of the organizations listed on the inside front cover for more information.

Help for Problem Drinkers and Alcoholics

Even though not knowing what causes people to drink too much makes it difficult to help them, it does not make it impossible. In fact, most problem drinkers and alcoholics who want to be helped can keep alcohol from hurting their lives.

There are three important types of treatment which seem to help problem drinkers and alcoholics.

1. *Alcoholics Anonymous* seems to be one of the most successful sources of help for alcoholics. AA has 13,000 local groups composed of recovering alcoholics who get together one or more times a week to help each other get sober and stay sober. Over half a million people world-wide are part of the fellowship. At AA meetings, members discuss why they used to drink so much, what their drinking did to them, how they've managed to stop drinking, and what life has been like since they stopped.

AA believes that people never recover from alcoholism – just as people never recover from diabetes. AA believes that "once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic," in the sense that alcoholics must never drink at all again if they hope to stay sober.

Two organizations have used the AA model for helping the relatives of alcoholics. The teenage children of alcoholic parents can join Alateen. Al-Anon is available to husbands, wives and friends of alcoholics, whether or not the alcoholic family member or

friend is in AA. In both Alateen and Al-Anon, members talk about how to help the alcoholic in their family and about how they can help *themselves* to avoid being damaged by the alcoholic's problems.

2. A second major type of help for both alcoholics and problem drinkers is *"talking" cures.* With this form of treatment, abusive drinkers talk with psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, or group discussion leaders about their problems. While talking things over with a friend or relative can be very helpful, often someone trained to help people with their problems can be more effective.

3. Finally, *drugs* are sometimes used to help alcoholics stop drinking. The best known drug is Antabuse. Drinkers who take Antabuse every day get violently ill if they then have even a small drink with alcohol in it. (Even being around alcohol fumes or eating food containing uncooked alcohol can make them sick.) However, to be effective in the long run, Antabuse needs to be combined with some type of counseling.

In addition to getting help from other people and from drugs to stop their abusive drinking, many alcoholics and problem drinkers cut down on their drinking on their own. For unknown reasons, they often just drink less as they get older. (The same thing happens with heroin addicts, too.)

Finally, some alcoholics and problem drinkers stop drinking when they have to face something which they feel is *more* painful than giving up alcohol. Sometimes a husband (or wife) will stop drinking when his wife (or the husband) is ready to get a divorce or when his boss threatens to fire him. Making the problem drinker "shape up or ship out" has been called "tough love." It involves telling the problem drinker that you care for him or her but won't put up with the drinking because you come first.

Most communities have places where problem drinkers and alcoholics can find help. These places are usually listed in the telephone book under the Department of Mental Health or Public Health.

Once a problem drinker or alcoholic is willing to admit he or she has a drinking problem and wants to be helped, help can be found. Once their friends or relatives want to find out how to help a problem drinker, this kind of assistance, too, can be located. For not only is it your decision about whether and how much you drink, it's also up to you to decide what to do about your relatives and friends who may drink too much.

Answers to Questions on Alcoholism from Page 14.

1.	2. F	6. F
a. F	3. T	7. T
b. T	4. F	8. F
c. T	5. F	

VI. GLOSSARY

Below is the meaning of many alcohol-related words including several used in this booklet.

ABSORPTION: How alcohol goes from the stomach and small intestine into the bloodstream.

ABSTAINER: A person who doesn't drink alcohol.

ALCOHOLIC: A person whose drinking causes problems. The person usually drinks often, drinks until he gets drunk, and cannot control his or her drinking.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (AA): A world-wide organization of recovering alcoholics. There are local groups in many towns. Members meet to discuss their problems related to alcohol so they can continue not to drink and to help others with drinking problems.

AL-ANON: A world-wide organization of wives and husbands of alcoholics. There are local groups in many towns. Members meet to discuss how to deal with their alcoholic husbands and wives.

ALATEEN: An organization for teenagers whose mothers or fathers are alcoholics. There are local groups in many towns. Members meet to discuss how to deal with their parent(s).

BLACKOUT: Being unable to remember at all what happened (what one said and did) when drunk.

BLOOD ALCOHOL CONTENT (BAC): The percentage of alcohol in a person's blood. In most states, a driver with a BAC of .10% is presumed to be driving while intoxicated (DWI).

DELIRIUM TREMENS (DTs): Hallucinations, shaking, nausea and other symptoms an alcoholic experiences when he or she suddenly stops drinking for several hours.

DISTILLATION: When wine or beer is heated, the alcohol becomes a gas. This gas is then cooled and becomes liquid alcohol. This is how hard liquor (whiskey, etc.) is made.

DRUG: Anything which people put on their skin or swallow which can have an effect on how their mind or body works.

DRUNK: The way people feel and act when they have had a lot of alcohol. "Drunk" usually means the person has lost all or a great deal of control of his or her actions and thoughts. Same as intoxicated.

DWI: Also called DUIL. Driving while intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol. In most states a driver whose Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) is .10% or higher is presumed to be DWI (DUIL).

ETHYL ALCOHOL: The only kind of alcohol which is safe to drink. It is made from fruit or cereals.

FERMENTATION: When yeast acts on the sugar in fruit juices or cereals to produce alcohol which can be used to make wine or beer.

HANGOVER: The sick feeling (headache, upset stomach, etc.) some people feel several hours after having been drunk or high. People get hangovers *after* all the alcohol has left their body and they are sober again. Only time makes a hangover go away.

HIGH: The way people feel when they have had enough alcohol to feel good, but not so much that they have lost significant control over what they say and do.

INTOXICATED: See DRUNK.

METHYL ALCOHOL: A type of alcohol which is poisonous if drunk. It is found in anti-freeze, paint thinner, and fuels. It is made from wood and is sometimes called "wood alcohol."

MINOR: A person who is not legally an adult. Every state has its own law saying at what age a person becomes an adult (usually 18). Minors cannot vote or buy alcohol.

OXIDATION: The addition of oxygen to another chemical. The liver adds oxygen to alcohol to produce carbon dioxide, water, and energy.

PEER: A person of your own standing and usually age. "Peer pressure" occurs when people with no special authority or power try to get other people like them to do (or not to do) something.

PROBLEM DRINKER: A person whose drinking causes him or her a problem or causes problems for other people. Problem drinkers have more control over their drinking than ALCOHOLICS do.

PROOF: The word used to describe the amount of alcohol in hard liquor. The proof number is always double the percentage of alcohol. One hundred proof whiskey is half or 50% alcohol.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TOLERANCE: People's ability over a long period of time to learn what effects drinking has on them and to train themselves to prevent these effects from causing trouble.

SKID ROW: The part of a town where "bums" live. Most skid row "bums" are *not* alcoholics. Most alcoholics are *not* skid row "bums," either.

TOLERANCE: The body's resistance to alcohol (or to any drug) because of repeated use. As a result of this tolerance, the person must drink more and more alcohol to get the same effects as earlier.

BAC WHEEL

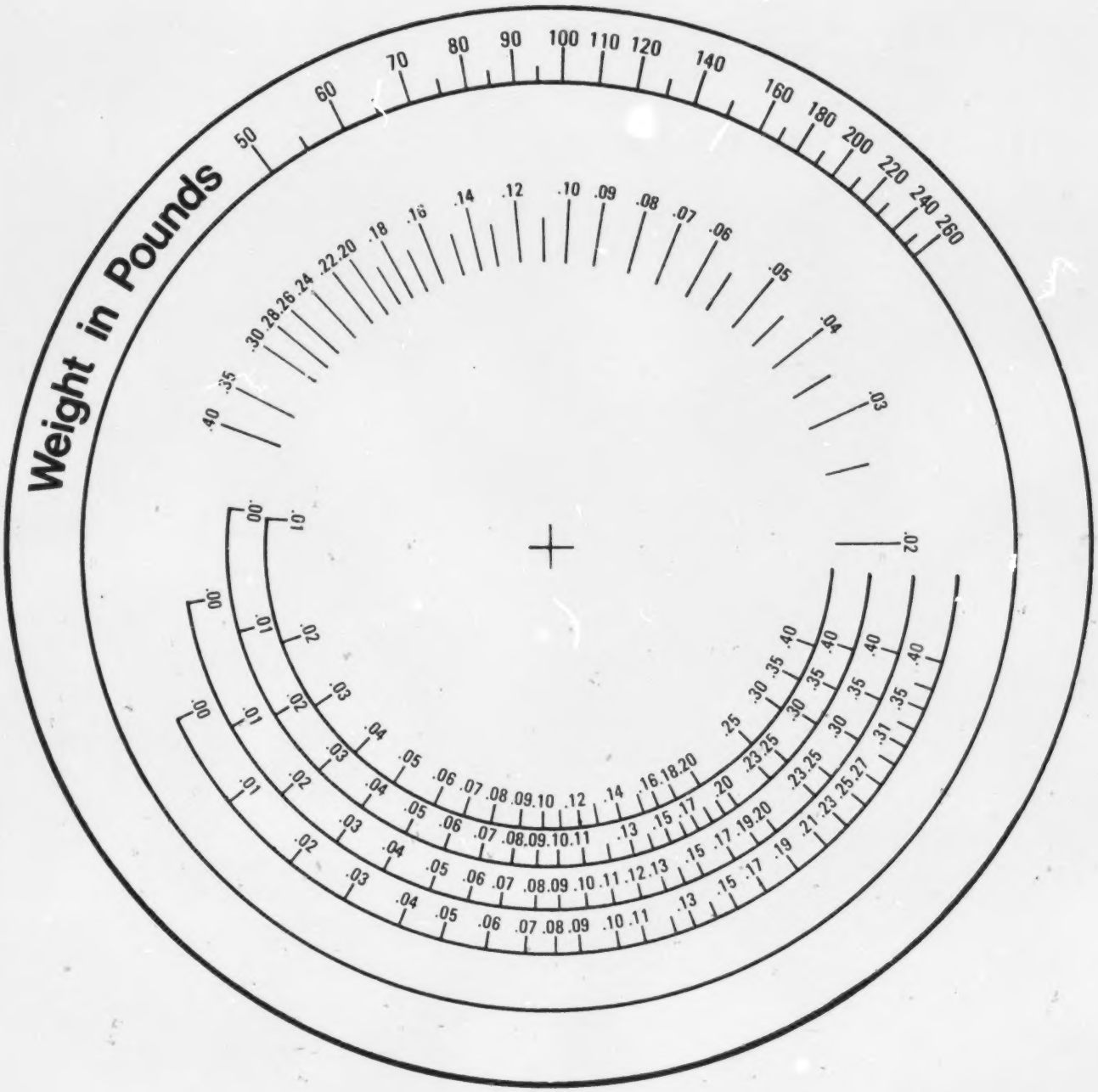
To learn to use the wheel which follows, let's take an example. Suppose you've had three *average* drinks. That could be beers, glasses of wine, or mixed drinks.

1. Line up the 3 in the Number of Drinks row with the outer ring which shows your weight.
2. Read the figure which appears in the upper window. This is your BAC if you've taken the three drinks within a quarter hour.
3. By looking at the bottom window, you can determine what your BAC would be with the passage of time.

Experiment with other combinations. What would your BAC be if you weighed fifty pounds more? What would it be if you had two drinks or ten drinks in two hours?

Of course, your BAC would be a little lower if you took your drinks after or during a big meal.

1. Paste each page onto cardboard or manila paper.
2. Trim around each circle.
3. Use a razor to cut the two sections marked "CUT OUT."
4. Put the smaller circle on top of the larger one, carefully fastening them together at the stars (centers) with a paper fastener.


Weight in Pounds
50 60 70 80 90 100 110 120 140 160 180 200 220 240 260
.40 .35 .30 .28 .26 .24 .22 .20 .18 .16 .14 .12 .10 .09 .08 .07 .06 .05 .04 .03 .02
.00 .01 .02 .03 .04 .05 .06 .07 .08 .09 .10 .12 .14 .16 .18 .20
.00 .01 .02 .03 .04 .05 .06 .07 .08 .09 .10 .11 .13 .15 .17 .19 .20
.00 .01 .02 .03 .04 .05 .06 .07 .08 .09 .10 .11 .12 .13 .15 .17 .19 .21 .23 .25 .27
.25 .30 .35 .40 .20 .23 .25 .30 .35 .40 .23 .25 .30 .35 .40 .31 .35 .40